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Action SS

Info

EXCISE

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1967 JUN 7 AM 5 00

VZCZCMJA700JIA239
PP RUEHCR
DE RUMJIR 27753 1580735
ZNY SSSSS
P R 070720Z JUN 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHCR/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO RUHHHQA/CINCPAC
STATE GRNC
BT
S E C R E T SAIGON 27753

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E X D I S

REF: STATE 207959; SAIGON 27480

1. IN TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION JUNE 6 BETWEEN [ ] AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR, FORMER GENERALLY CONFIRMED MAIN POINTS MADE BY [ ], THERE WERE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS AND EMPHASES, HOWEVER, OBVIOUSLY REFLECTING [ ]

2. HE AGREED ENTIRELY WITH [ ] VIEW THAT THIEU AND KY MUST BE BROUGHT TOGETHER ALONE TO SEE IF THEY CAN WORK OUT AN UNDERSTANDING FOR THE FUTURE. [ ] SAID THAT GENERAL THIEU'S MOOD WAS MUCH BETTER THAN WHEN HE [ ] FIRST ARRIVED HERE A FEW WEEKS AGO AND THIEU WAS NO ONGER AS BITTER AND HURT AS HE HAD BEEN. [ ] WAS HIMSELF STILL CONFIDENT THAT AN UNDERSTANDING COULD BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN

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THEM BUT IT WAS APPARENT, AS THE CONVERSATION DEVELOPED, THAT IT WOULD BE HEAVILY CONTINGENT ON CERTAIN ACTIONS AND CO PROMISES TO BE MADE ON KY'S SIDE.

3. [ ] MENTIONED THE SAME TWO ALTERNATIVE POSITIONS TO THE PRESIDENCY AS [ ] HAD, I.E., PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND HEAD OF THE ARMED FORCES, BUT HE PUT THEM AS ALTERNA-

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TIVES TO BE CONSIDERED BY BOTH PRINCIPAGUAND NOT JUST THIEU. WHO WAS HAVING DINNER THAT EVENING WITH [redacted] AND DINH TRINH CHINH (CURRENTLY AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND AND FORMER CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF KY) REITERATED THAT CAREFUL PREPARATION WAS STILL NEEDED FOR THE THIEU-KY TALK. THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION HE EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF ACHIEVING ULTIMATE BALANCE OF REGIONAL, RELIGIOUS, MILITARY AND OTHER IMPORTANT CIVILIAN ELEMENTS IN VIETNAM IN FINAL GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD EMERGE FROM ELECTIONS. HE ANTICIPATED THAT EVEN IF THIEU AND KY ARR[illegible] AT A MUTUALLY AGREEABLE UNDERSTANDING IN THEIR TALK, THEY WOULD PROBABLY EACH MAINTAIN THE PUBLIC POSITION THAT THEY WERE RUNNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY UNTIL VERY CLOSE TO THE EARLY JULY FILING DATE. HE

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THEN SPECULATED THAT ULTIMATELY THIEU AND KY MIGHT BOTH WITHDRAW BY AGREEMENT IN ORDER TO HAVE A SOUTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATE ELECTED AS PRESIDENT, WHO WOULD SUBSEQUENTLY APPOINT BOTH OF THEM TO HIGH POSITIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, AS PRIME MINSTER, HEAD OF THE ARMED FORCES, OR HEADING A TICKET FOR THE SENATE, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING OF ASSUMING THE PRESIDENCY OF THAT BODY.

4. AS INDICATED, [redacted] WHOLE EMPHASIS WAS ON THE NECESSITY FOR BROAD NATIONAL UNITY, A VIEWPOINT WHICH HE SAID GENERAL THIEU STRONGLY SUPPORTED, BUT HE CITED NO EVIDENCE THAT THIS CONCEPT AS DESCRIBED BY HIM WAS AS YET SHARED BY KY. HE WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF SOME OF THE PEOPLE SURROUNDING KY, MENTIONING GENERAL LOAN IN PARTICULAR, AND IT WAS EVIDENT THAT IN HIS VIEW PART OF ANY SOLUTION AGREED BETWEEN THIEU AND KY WOULD HAVE TO BE ELIMINATION OF THE MOST OBJECTIONABLE PERSONS CLOSE TO KY AND SUBMERSION BY BOTH PRINCIPALS OF PERSONAL PRIDE AND AMBITION IN THE BROADER NATIONAL INTEREST. AS A DESCRIPTIVE FOOTNOTE TO THE DEEP MISUNDERSTANDING THAT HAD ARISEN BETWEEN THIEU AND KY AND AMONG THE TOP GENERALS,

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[redacted] SAID THAT ONE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN VIETNAM. HE SAID THE WIVES OF MANY OF THOSE DIRECTLY CONCERNED HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR EXACERBATING FEELINGS AND IN SOME CASES HAD "LED THEIR HUSBANDS AROUND BY THEIR NOSES."

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5. [redacted] THEN SAID HE THOUGHT THE U.S. MUST USE ITS INFLUENCE IN BRINGING THIEU AND KY TOGETHER AND ULTIMATELY IN ENCOURAGING COOPERATION BETWEEN THEM AND THE PRINCIPAL CIVILIAN CANDIDATES AND LEADERS. POLITICAL COUNSELOR COMMENTED THAT WE OF COURSE SHARED THIS BROAD OBJECTIVE OF ACHIEVING MAXIMUM NATIONAL UNITY AS A BASE FOR THE FUTURE ELECTED GOVERNMENT BUT ADDED THAT THE SPECIFIC DECISIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO IT MUST BE ESSENTIALLY UNDERTAKEN BY THE VIETNAMESE THEMSELVES. [redacted] THOUGHT THAT KY HIMSELF COULD BE PERSUADED TO REACH A COMPROMISE IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST AND TO SEE THAT TRULY FAIR ELECTIONS AND EQUAL FACILITIES FOR THE CANDIDATES WOULD BE ASSURED IF THE U.S. SUPPORTED THESE OBJECTIVES AND IF KY'S IMMEDIATE ASSOCIATES DID NOT CONTROL OR PREJUDICE THIS DECISION. HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT STEPS THAT b-1 ed

HE FELT HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN BY SOME OF KY'S SUPPORTERS WHICH MIGHT PREJUDICE THE ELECTION PROCESS.

6. COMMENT: [redacted]'S RELATIVE OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE COINCIDES GENERALLY WITH [redacted] BUT IT IS APPARENT THAT [redacted]IS HOPING FOR A MUTUAL SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND COMPROMISE THAT MAY NOT BE REALIZEABLE. I AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT IF ANY SUCH SOLUTION IS TO BE ARRIVED AT IT WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE THAT IT BE REACHED BY THE TWO PRINCIPALS THEMSELVES THROUGH A GENUINE AND FULL UNDERSTANDING. I WILL OF COURSE IN MY CONVERSATIONS WITH BOTH OF THEM CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO COME TOGETHER IN SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING, WHICH WILL UNIFY RATHER THAN DIVIDE THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE, BUT I CAN NOT BE VERY SANGUINE. A TIME MAY COME WHEN MORE ACTIVE INTERVENTION WILL BE REQUIRED ON MY PART. I WILL BE WATCHING THE SITUATION CLOSELY WITH THIS IN MIND.

BUNKER

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NOTE: PASSED S/S-O, WHITE HOUSE AT 7:13 A.M. 6/7/67

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